



# HEALTH DEPARTMENT

*Caring today for a healthy tomorrow*

## Health Matters

### Vaccine-preventable Illnesses Roar Back



**Adam London, RS, MPA**

**Health Officer**

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Who would think a trip to Disneyland would end in more than 60 people falling ill from the measles? Or that nearly 100 cases of pertussis would be confirmed in and around Traverse City? These illnesses, once close to being eradicated, have come back strong, in part because some parents refuse to vaccinate their children, or delaying these life-saving immunizations. Vaccines are the best defense we have against serious, preventable, and sometimes deadly infectious diseases.

Vaccines prepare your body for future attacks. Killed or modified microbes trick the body into thinking an infection has occurred, triggering the immune system to attack the harmless vaccine. This prepares the body from future invasions of that kind of microbe. The immune system recognizes the microbe and stops the infection. Vaccines are effective in producing immunity about 90-100% of the time.

There are many myths and misconceptions about vaccines that make people question if they should get vaccinated or have their children vaccinated. If you were in a car accident, would you rely on life-saving treatment from a celebrity? Parents should talk to their doctors to get credible, scientific information about vaccines.

Vaccines are not associated with risk of autism. The results of a 1998 medical study that claimed a connection were flawed; the physician behind the study lost his license after a panel found he engaged in unethical activity. Some argue that vaccinations aren't necessary today, because better hygiene and sanitation can prevent the spread of disease. While we are better at preventing the spread of disease, disease-causing germs are still around and continue to make people sick.

Vaccines don't just protect the immunized, they can help protect others. When most members of a community are protected against a disease through vaccines it is known as "community immunity." This helps contain the spread of a contagious disease and protect those who aren't eligible for certain vaccines like infants, pregnant women, or people with weakened immune systems.

A decision to not immunize a child can involve putting the child and others at risk for contracting a potentially deadly disease. The United States has the safest, most effective vaccine supply in history. Strict, extensive evaluations determine safety and effectiveness by the FDA. Talk to your health care provider about guidelines for vaccinations based on age, health conditions, and other factors.

For more information about vaccines, go to [www.accessKent.com/immunizations](http://www.accessKent.com/immunizations).



## License Your Dog!!

- Michigan law requires that all dogs over the age of four months are licensed and all new dogs are licensed within 30 days.
- A dog license helps to get your dog home safe if they become lost.
- Dog licensing provides funding for animal control to investigate and prosecute animal cruelty and neglect, as well as responding to loose or aggressive dogs.
- One-year and three-year licenses are now available at the Kent County Animal Shelter, at many Township and City Offices, and several local veterinary clinics.

Learn more at:

**AccessKent.com/KCAS**

Shelter Hours:

M-F 9:30 AM—1 PM\*  
2 PM—6:30 PM\*

Closed Saturday and Sunday

\*ALL ADOPTIONS MUST BE  
COMPLETE ONE HOUR BEFORE  
CLOSING.

## KCHD Institutes New State Requirements for Immunization Waivers

The Kent County Health Department implemented the new state waiver requirements for unvaccinated children, which includes an educational meeting with health department staff. Starting January 1, 2015, parents who do not vaccinate their children must now obtain a certified non-medical waiver from a local health department in order for their children to attend school. All schools and childcare providers will be receiving information on the new rules from the state and here from the Kent County Health Department.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

**Why is this rule change important?** Michigan has one of the highest waiver rates in the country. Some counties in Michigan have waiver rates as high as 20.7%. This means that more than 20% of the students in those counties haven't gotten all their vaccines. Some school buildings have even higher waiver rates. This leaves communities vulnerable to diseases such as measles, chickenpox, and pertussis (whooping cough). Immunizations are one of the most effective ways to protect children from harmful diseases and even death.

**What has the new rule changed for parents/guardians?** Parents/guardians who want to claim a nonmedical waiver will have an opportunity to have a discussion about immunizations with county health department staff and receive information on the benefits of vaccination and the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases. The new rule does not take away a parent's/guardian's right to obtain a nonmedical waiver.

**What is a nonmedical waiver?** A nonmedical waiver is a parent's/guardian's written statement indicating their religious or philosophical (other) objections to a particular vaccination(s).

**Who does this new rule apply to?** The new rule applies to all children who are enrolled in a public or private:

- ◆ Licensed childcare, preschool, and Head Start programs
- ◆ Kindergarten, 7th grade, and any newly enrolled student into the school district

**What does certified, nonmedical waiver mean?** Certified, nonmedical waiver means that the official State of Michigan Immunization Waiver Form (current date: January 1, 2015) is used and the county health department stamp and signature of the authorizing agent (county health department staff) completing the immunization education with the parent/guardian is on the form.

**Can a parent /guardian obtain a certified, nonmedical waiver form from the school, childcare center, or healthcare provider?** No, the certified nonmedical waiver can only be obtained at a county health department.

**For more information, please visit [www.michigan.gov/immunize](http://www.michigan.gov/immunize).**

## Honoring the Dream on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Leaders of the Kent County Health Department attended the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Grand Rapids Urban League Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Corporate Breakfast, held at Steelcase Global Headquarters on January 19, 2015.



From left: Mark Murray, Dr. Andre Perry, Lee Nelson Weber, Teresa Branson, and Joe Jones engage in Fireside Chat.

### Deputy Administrative

Health Officer Teresa Branson joined a panel of speakers for a “Fireside Chat with Thought Leaders” in front of a crowd of 600 people. Each member of the panel provided a quote from Dr. King and a question. *“The quality, not the longevity, of one’s life is what is important,”* was presented to Ms. Branson, with the question: “Here in Kent County, what is it going to take for the African American community to experience an improved quality of life as it pertains to health?”

“We’ve experienced some improvements with access to care through Health Care Reform,” said Branson. “The Affordable Care Act is noted as the most important Civil Rights milestone, since the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The ACA helps close the racial gap in health coverage and helps eliminate disparities in health care and health status. We have to continually ask ourselves what it will take for African Americans to experience health and quality of life. We need to ensure the Affordability, Availability, Accessibility, Accommodation and Acceptability of care.”

In addition to the morning event, staff from numerous Kent County departments engaged in a “Day of Service,” volunteering at God’s Kitchen in Grand Rapids (below) for several hours to serve the community.



### Healthy Kent Winter Summit

March 3, 2015

10 a.m.-12:00 noon

Kent County Health

Department

700 Fuller NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Over the past year, Healthy Kent and the Kent County Health Department have been collecting data, concerns and perceptions about health and wellness, for the 2014 Community Health Needs Assessment .

Healthy Kent will be releasing the latest findings and asking stakeholders to identify the highest priorities as they prepare to complete the 2015 Community Health Improvement Plan.

Details at:

**[kentcountychna.org](http://kentcountychna.org)**



**HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT**  
*Caring today for a healthy tomorrow*

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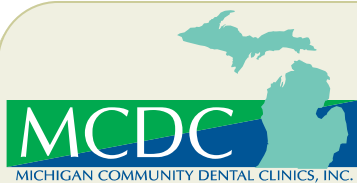


## Keep Your Child's Teeth Healthy

February is National Children's Dental Health Month! It is important to care for your child's teeth early, to give them a good start on a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends taking your child to the dentist within six months after his or her first tooth comes in, or by the age of one. If you haven't taken your child for a dental checkup, make an appointment as soon as possible. At the dentist, expect them to look for oral problems, clean and provide tips for daily oral care, as well as discuss teething or thumb sucking habits and the risks of developing tooth decay.

As soon as teeth appear, so can decay. Between the ages of 12 and 15, half of U.S. children have tooth decay. Nearly all tooth decay can be prevented. Here are some very important tips to prevent tooth decay.:

- Visit the dentist regularly, every six month dental visits are recommended.
- Between the ages of 4 and 6, expect your dentist to take a first set of X-rays to check for cavities.
- Brush teeth for two minutes, two times a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush and brush the inside and outer surfaces of each tooth at a 45-degree angle.
- Clean between teeth and floss daily.
- Eat healthy and limit starchy and sugary snacks, they tend to stick to the teeth for hours and can cause decay.
- Call your dentist if your child complains of tooth pain, it could be a sign of a cavity that needs treatment.



Michigan Community Dental Clinics (MCDC), a not-for-profit organization that operates public dental clinics on behalf of local health departments. The South Clinic, located at 4700 Kalamazoo SE in Kentwood, partners with KCHD, serving those enrolled in Medicaid and/or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

**Dental patients call  
Michigan Community  
Dental Clinics at  
877.313.6232 for an  
appointment.**

**[www.midental.org](http://www.midental.org)**



## State Departments to Merge

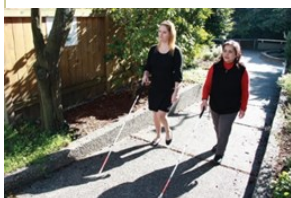
Governor Rick Snyder announced he will issue an Executive Order to merge the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH).

The announcement came during the State of the State Address in January. Gov. Snyder referred to a "River of Opportunity" emphasizing efficient, effective and accountable government.

The Governor's Office has said "This reorganization will entail looking at every program government offers to see how we can achieve more flexibility to become more person-centric, reforming how we interface with our customers through technology, and making the service delivery system more focused on the customer's needs in an efficient way." Details are still in the works and very little information

has been provided to local health departments at this time.

Both MDCH and DHS are currently being led by interim director Nick Lyon. The two departments employ more than 14,000 employees statewide. The new department would be called the **Michigan Department of Health and Human Services**.



## Blind & Visually Impaired Awareness Workshop

**Kent County Health Department**

**700 Fuller Ave NE, Grand Rapids, MI**

**Friday, February 20, 2015, 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

This interactive workshop will increase awareness of accessibility differences among people who are blind, visually impaired, and sighted, and will explore implications for emergency preparedness and response.

### Speakers:

**Charis Austin, Client Advocate**

Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired

**Tom Behler, Professor of Sociology**

Ferris State University

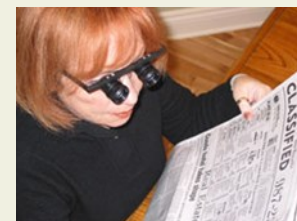
**Carol Bergman, Safety & Security Coordinator**

Clark Retirement Community

Please register by Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup> at this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BVIworkshop>

or call Pat Draper at 616-632-7292



Workshop brought to you by the Kent County Disaster Mental Health and Human Services Committee



**ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED**



**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
Caring today for a healthy tomorrow

**SNEAK PEAK  
&  
PANEL  
DISCUSSION**

**Join  
Us!**

# **RAISING OF AMERICA**

## *Early Childhood & the Future of our Nation*

Thursday, April 16, 2015, 11:30 AM-1:30 PM & 6:30 PM-8:30 PM

Celebration! Cinema South, 1506 Eastport Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508

We all want what is best for our children and we live in the richest country in the world, so why does child well-being in the U.S. rank 26 out of 29 rich countries? Why do we as a country allow our most vulnerable children to fall so much further behind?

This hour-long episode explores how a strong start for all our kids leads not only to better individual learning, earning, and mental and physical health, but also to a healthier, safer, better educated, more prosperous, and more equitable America.

Join us to learn more, ask questions, and to discuss how we can work together to address this issue in our community.

**04.16.15**

**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**

**11:30 AM  
&  
6:30 PM**

Brought to you by a  
community collaboration



Contact Karyn Pelon with any questions or inquiries at  
616.632.7216 or [karyn.pelon@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:karyn.pelon@kentcountymi.gov)

Visit [RaisingofAmerica.org](http://RaisingofAmerica.org) for more information on the national campaign

# KCHD PERFORMANCE BRIEF

FIRST QUARTER, JANUARY 2015

## Focus on Environmental Health

The focus of the January 2015 Performance Management (PM) Council meeting was on strategies led by the Environmental Health (EH) Division at the Kent County Health Department. The strategies reviewed covered a series of topics including: food safety, dog licensing, air quality, water quality, food safety, and customer service.

Several EH Division staff attended the meeting to provide verbal updates to the PM Council. Overall, the updates were positive and indicated that progress is being made toward the achievement of the numerous strategies assigned to EH staff. There were some recommendations to amend or eliminate select strategies that no longer align with the vision of the Department and/or work of the EH Division.

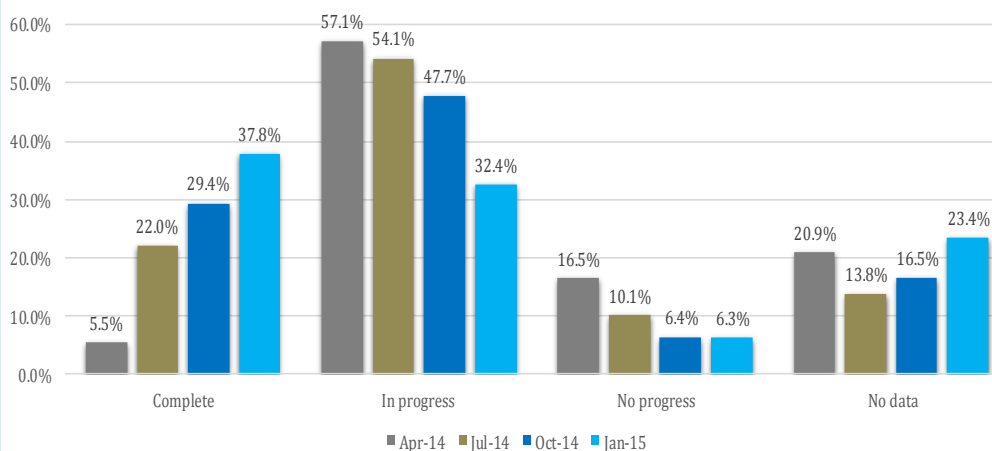
## Key Environmental Health Achievements

- ⇒ Despite efforts throughout 2014 aimed to increase dog licensing, the Animal Shelter was unable to meet its goal for license sales. EH has contracted with a consultant and initiated a quality improvement project for this program in December 2014.
- ⇒ The KCHD well and septic program also initiated a quality improvement project in December 2014 to improve the process of issuing well and septic permits by reducing the time it takes from application submission to issuance of the permit. This should also improve customer satisfaction among clients, if successful.

## KCHD PM Council

The KCHD Performance Management (PM) Council was established in October 2013 and began reviewing performance data in January 2014. This group meets quarterly to review progress on 2013-2018 KCHD Strategic Plan

Reported Strategy Implementation:  
Progress Data (April 2014 - January 2015)



The bar chart illustrates KCHD performance data collected during the past four quarters. A positive trend continues for “completed” strategies. Because more strategies are being completed, KCHD has seen the percentage of strategies reported as “in progress” or having “no progress” decrease each quarter. Since July, there has been an increase in the percentage of strategies classified as having “no data”. This increase could be reflective of staffing transitions within KCHD management, the need for KCHD leadership to reassign strategies, and/or evaluate the strategic plan in 2015 to realign strategic directions with KCHD resources.





# Kent County Health Department



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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931.

The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter.

The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids.

[www.accessKent.com/Health](http://www.accessKent.com/Health)



## Mission Statement:

To serve, protect and promote a healthy community for all.